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The

GOLDSMITH OF > NOME AND OTHER VERSE

SAM C DUNHAM

COVER DESIGN BY THE AUTHOR

WASHINGTON, D. C.
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MCMI

Copyrighted, 1901. By Samuel C. Dunham. To the workers on the Yukon, who through the long, cold winter of national neglect have been patiently working while watching and waiting for the ice to melt.



PREFACE

These verses were written while the author was under assignment to Northern Alaska in 1897-1898 as a Statistical Expert of the Department of Labor, and in 1899-1900 as a Special Agent of the Twelfth Census. They are the free expression of some sentiments which "Official Courtesy" quite properly excluded from his formal reports to the Commissioner of Labor and the Director of the Census. Most of them have appeared in various newspapers-The New York Sun, The San Francisco Examiner, The Washington Post, The Illustrated London News, and others. They are presented as an appeal from the tax-burdened and unrepresented people of Alaska to the Government at Washington for relief from the wrongs which they have porne too patiently for twenty years.

In 1900 Alaska paid into the Treasury of the United States revenues averaging \$1,207.43 for every day in the year. For what?

SAM C. DUNHAM.

WASHINGTON, D. C., March 1, 1901.



CONTENTS

b and a second s	
The Men Who Blaze the Trail	9
Comrades of the Klondike	ſ
A Reply 13	3
Why the Devil Never Visits the Yukon 15	5
Arctic Lightning 19)
Just Back from Dawson 20)
Sence I Come Back from Dawson 25	5
I'm Goin' Back to Dawson 30)
To Joaquin Miller 36	ŝ
Alaska to Uncle Sam	7
Thoughts Suggested by My Forty-fifth Birthday 42	2
The Lament of the Old Sour Dough 44	ļ
The Goldsmith of Nome 48	3
Since the Judge Left Here for Nome 59)
To the Yukon Order of Pioneers 64	ŀ
A Greeting to the Swedes	5
The Poor Swede71	
Starving Once, Receiving Now 72	,
Homeward Bound 74	ŀ
To the Vukon Sour Doughs	,



THE MEN WHO BLAZE THE TRAIL

Let others sing of those who've won
Full hoard of virgin gold!
I strike the lyre for those who've none,
But yet are strong and bold,—
Who've blazed the trails through a pathless waste
And on the world's new chart have traced
The lines which lead where the treasure's placed,
And all their secrets told.

They search the streams and hillsides rend,
The hidden truth to learn;
They trudge where land and sky-line blend,
And gaze till eyeballs burn;
They scale bleak heights whence vast plains sweep,
And sow for those who come to reap,
While wives and sweethearts in homeland weep
And pray for their return.

Afar in regions of night-gloomed day
Their slender shadows leap;
O'er snow-crowned peaks they fight their way
To where the Gold-gods sleep;
Where the congelations of the ages lie,
And athwart the dome of the midnight sky
Aurora's moon-drenched splendors fly,
Onward their footsteps creep.

Out where Deathland, reft of bush or tree,
Spreads like a sun-browned lawn;
To the verge of the rigid, ice-locked sea,
Where twilight greets the dawn;
Where a sheenless moon sails the sunlit night,
Where inert and dim bides the Mystic Light,
And the white swan ends his vernal flight,
They still are pressing on.

So while others sing of the chosen few
Who o'er the Fates prevail,

I will sing of the many, staunch and true,
Whose brave hearts never quail,—
Who with dauntless spirit of pioneers
A state are building for the coming years,
Their sole reward their loved ones' tears,—
The men who blaze the trail!

CIRCLE CITY, Jan. 1, 1898.

COMRADES OF THE KLONDIKE

I.

Have you, too, banged at the Chilkoot,
That storm-locked gate to the golden door?
Those thunder-built steeps have words built to suit,
And whether you prayed or whether you swore,
'Twere one, where it seemed that an oath were a
prayer,—

Seemed that God couldn't care, Seemed that God wasn't there!

II

Have you, too, climbed to the Klondike?
Hast talked as a friend to the five-horned stars?
With muckluc shoon and with talspike
Hast bared gray head to the golden bars,
Those heaven-built bars where Morning is born?
Hast drunk with Maiden Morn
From Klondike's golden horn?

ш

Hast read, low-voiced, by the Northlights Such sermons as never men say?
Hast sat and sat with the Midnights,
That sit and that sit all day?
Hast heard the iceberg's boom on boom?
Hast heard the silence, the room?
The glory of God, the gloom?

IV

Then come to my sunland, my soldier,—
Aye, come to my heart, and to stay!
For better crusader or bolder
Bared never his breast to the fray,
And whether you prayed or you cursed,
You dared the best—and the worst—
That ever brave man durst.

JOAQUIN MILLER.

CIRCLE CITY, Oct. 19, 1897.

A REPLY

Ι

I, too, have banged at the Chilkoot;
I have scaled her storm-torn height
And slid down her trail with dizzy shoot
That produced a Northern Light;
And I uttered a curse-laden prayer,—
Of course God didn't care,
For only the Devil was there.

H

I, too, have climbed to the Klondike,
Through bog and muck and roots,
Till my legs were as stiff as thy talspike
And the water filled both of my boots;
Have drunk from golden horn
With maidens, night to morn,—
I acknowledge the corn.

III

Have heard, loud-voiced, by the Northlights Such oaths as only men say;
Have lain awake through the midnights
And fought mosquitoes all day;
Cursed Klondike's—not the iceberg's—boom,
And paid an ounce for a room,
Which filled my soul with gloom.

IV

My friend, I'll come to thy sunland
As soon as this long winter's o'er,
And I'll drink to thy health in the one land
Whither thy thoughts ever soar;
And though this drought be the worst
That ever humanity cursed,
At last we'll banish our thirst.

CIRCLE CITY, Oct. 21, 1897.

WHY THE DEVIL NEVER VISITS THE YUKON

The Devil one day, so the sagas say,

Taking his Christmas vacation,
On outstretched pinions sailed this way,
In search of souls for damnation.

With malice prepense, the cold was intense (It always is in this section), And our unclad friend, in his innocence,

Came without proper protection.

(There are others, I'm told, who, equally bold,
Come here from a warmer climate,

To find that they're a soft snap for the cold,
Just like hell's thin-blooded primate).

In the pathless wood a lone wigwam stood,

Not far from the ice-bound river,

And in hope of finding there warmth and food,

Nick shook the flap with a shiver.

No strangers to sin, they quick took him in, And he stood with back to the fire While the host prepared a big moose-skin And "night-cap" on which to retire.

He cursed the weather, and asked them whether
There was any hope for a change;
He switched his tail like a thong of leather
And said that its fork felt strange.

A maiden half-fair, with raven-black hair
And a beautiful bear-tooth brooch,
Handed our friend, without offering a chair,
A cup of the stuff they call "hootch."

Now I wasn't there, but the sagas declare

The draught he quaffed was a rank one,—
A fact to which it is needless to swear

Before a man who has drank one.

Our cold friend from hell gave a fiendish yell,
And soon all his limbs were jerkin',
And flat on the ground convulsive he fell,
For the hootch had got its work in.

* * * * * * *

He opened his eyes, now looking crosswise,
And asked who it was that slugged him,
And opened them wider, in wild surprise,
When he learned they had only drugged him.

When able to walk and freely to talk,

He asked them what was in it,

And the chief concoctor, without a balk,

Told him in less than a minute:

"With most cunning skill we concoct the swill
Of sugar, sour dough and berries,
And sell it to white men by quart or gill
In spite of the missionaries.

"But while it is bad, I am very glad

To say that high-wines are worse;

The white chiefs import them, which makes us sad

And puts a big kink in our purse.

"That unrectified sin the whites smuggle in Will kill if you don't dilute it,—
A thing which they do, large profits to win;
No one will dare to dispute it."

As pale as grim Death and with quickened breath,
Old Nick gasped, "I'll hie me southward,
And prone on the sulphurous marge of Lethe,
I'll dash its sweet waters mouthward.

"That infernal stuff is quite strong enough
To run a small hell without me;
I firmly believe I'll carry its rough
Effects for a year about me."

He then climbed the sky, and with curdling cry
Soared off through the azure, sinwards,
In the well-stocked sideboards of hell to try
To find something to soothe his inwards.

And up to this day, so the sagas say,

The Devil flies shy of this region,

Contented, aye! glad, to resign his sway

To Hootch and his High-wine Legion.

CIRCLE CITY, Jan. 8, 1898.

ARCTIC LIGHTNING

Far out where the sullen darkness Palls the silent, ice-chained sea, Spring, low-arched, the fragile Northlights O'er the realm of mystery: From their haunts beneath the crescent, Where the murky shadows lie, Come Aurora's pale magicians. With their festoons for the sky, And while the Color Sergeant musters His Immortal Seven To hang their banners from the dome And drape the walls of heaven, Straight he hurls his shafts of silver High up in the star-gemmed blue, Where the wraiths of light, soft-tinted And of swiftly-changing hue, Through the long and ghostly vigils Of the voiceless Arctic night Weirdly gleam and faintly whisper As they tremble out of sight.

JUST BACK FROM DAWSON

- I've just got back from Dawson, where the Arctic rainbow ends,
- An' the swiftly-rushin' Klondike with the mighty
 Yukon blends;
- Where the sun on Christmas mornin' in the act of risin' sets,
- So that just a minit's sunshine is all that region gets:
- An' the rimplin' midnight glories through the moontranced heavens fly,
- While the guileless sour-dough miners set around the stove and lie
- 'Bout the good old times at Circle, 'fore the smooth promoters came
- An' set the country boomin' in a way that is a shame.

- I've just got back from Dawson, where the large mosquitoes sing,
- An' soon as they forsake the camp, their small successors sting:
- Where 'long about the last of June the sun again surprises
- The new-arrived inhabitants, an' while it's settin' rises;
- Where the price of pay-streak bacon is two dollars for a pound,
- An' to treat your friends at Spencer's costs an ounce or two a round,
- An' they sell Seattle cider, in the guise of dry champagne,
- Which instituots a lingerin' drunk that's very far from plain.
- I've just returned from Dawson, where the charge for anteek eggs
- Makes considerable difference in length of buyers' legs:
- Where our helpful friends in Washington, misled by bad advice,
- Concluded they could operate steam enjines on the ice,
- An' are tryin' now the reindeer, a-feedin' them on moss,
- But wherever they've been tried so far there's been a heavy loss,

While all the old trail-breakers to their pet traditions cling

An' still maintain with vehemence—"the dog's the proper thing."

I've just reached here from Dawson, where I seen Frank Slavin spar,

An' also seen his victim a-revivin' at the bar While Frank shook hands with all his friends an'

loudly did declare

That he could lick Fitzsimmons, too, if he was only there;

An' seen Oklahoma Wilson attempt to instigate
A coop de Colt, but ere his gun became articulate
They yanked him to the barracks in a way he won't
forget,

An' to cultivate his harmlessness they're boardin' him there yet.

I've just come out from Dawson, where everybody's

Is bein' undermined an' ruined in a wild-eyed rush for wealth,

An' a score or so of schemers, on evil projects bent, Are robbin' the community to a terrible extent;

Where the men who dig the treasure are strong au' brave an' bold.

- Wrenchin' from the glacier's bowels stockin's full of yellow gold,
- While the transportation pirates slyly syndicate their gall
- With the criminal intention of absorbin' of it all.
- I've just escaped from Dawson, where the ice grows ten feet thick,
- An' doods who like their baths served cold don't take 'em in a crick;
- Where no one, be he rich or poor, is ever dubbed a "hero"
- Till he has done his hundred miles at 60 less than zero:
- Where men chop water out in chunks an' pile it on the banks.
- An' make their hot-air heaters out of empty coal-oil tanks.
- An' read back-number papers by the unobtrusive rays
 Of tallow-dips an' davy lamps—dim lights of other
 days.
- I've just emerged from Dawson, a bad financial wreck,
- For instead of gettin' dust galore, I got it in the neck,
- Where Adam got the apple in that episode with Eve.

- Which led to woe an' stern decree that they would have to leave,
- Like thirty thousand other jays, by golden visions lured.
- Who climbed the trails, through hardships to which they weren't inured,
- To find that them Dominion knaves, by dastardly deceits,
- Had concessioned everything in sight an' even leased the streets.

WASHINGTON, D. C., Nov. 25, 1898.

SENCE I COME BACK FROM DAWSON

- Sence I come back from Dawson to these old familiar scenes,
- I've read the yaller journals an' the 10-cent magazines,
- An' to sort o' classify events an' find out what occurred
- While I was hibernatin' where the light of God was blurred.
- I've been searchin' through the columns of the daily picture-press,
- To see if I could ascertain, or formulate a guess,
- Why the scribblers who last autumn so artistically lied
- 'Bout the riches of the Klondike concluded to subside.

- Then every trail was occupied by journalistic beats
 Who represented (with slim cards) all saffron-tinted
 sheets
- From Seattle to Savannah an' from Bangor to Duluth,
- But nary one of them was there to represent the truth.
- They stumbled up the Chilkoot an' they loafed along the lakes,
- An' when not a-photographin' things or writin' up their fakes,
- Imbibed raw rum from Hudson Bay, an' dressed in goffin' suits,
- Stood 'round an' told old-timers 'bout the shortest Klondike roots.
- Now I've gathered from my readin' that the reason why they quit
- Writin' lies about the Klondike was, as lawyers say, to-wit:
- Havin' placed us in cold storage an' done all the harm they could,
- They felt a awful cravin' for a brand of booze that's good,
- An' left at once to sponge it, an' unable to refrain
- From causin' people trouble, they arranged a war with Spain,

- An' to properly conduct the same, rushed bravely to the front
- An' led all the gallant charges an' bore the battle's brunt.
- Now, while us Klondike refugees most greevusly deplore
- The mournful fact so few of them passed to the other shore,
- Our grief is curtailed by the thought which punctuates our sobs.
- That some of them who were not killed have lately lost their jobs.
- An' sence my feelin's is aroused, some words I've got to say
- About the highly lucrative an' lowly sinful way
- The experts an' perfessers told the things they didn't know
- (A-settin' in warm rooms at home) about the realm of snow.
- Of all their stories I have read, the worst about that far land
- Was written by a man whose brow has long worn Fiction's garland,
- Who in the "Klondike Number" of a well-known magazine
- Told of the sylvan beauties of some trails he'd never seen,

- With purlin' brooks an' wild delights an' picnics everywhere
- (Things that exist in poets' dreams, but don't exist up there):
- Then followed in the steps of them he'd so cruelly misled.
- To write about the scenery an' enumerate the dead.
- Perhaps 't will seem that I've assumed a gay an' flippant air,
- But while I'm settin' here to-night a ghost stands by my chair.
- Again I see a famished form stretched 'neath a sombre sky;
- Again I fold the shriveled hands an' close the deathglazed eye;
- I see the horrors Falsehood wrought, an' hear again the wail
- Of its victim as he perished on a panoramic trail,
- Where his bleached an' badly-scattered bones is all that's left to tell
- How he battled with the terrors of a thousand miles of hell.
- Now, as I ain't no statesman, I can't figger what we'll gain
- Through this unexpected legacy of trouble from old Spain;

But as a unkissed hero from the barren Yukon Flats, I modestly petition our distinguished diplomats:
In your God-directed efforts to emancipate mankind,
Don't forget your helpless brothers in your Arctic
wilds confined,

But in your swoop for liberty, to right an' justice true,

Extend a helpin' hand to them, -annex Alaska, too.

WASHINGTON, D. C., Jan. 1, 1899.

I'M GOIN' BACK TO DAWSON

- I'm goin' back to Dawson, an' suppose I must explain
- How I generated nerve enough to hit that trail again.
- I've tramped this land from east to west an' tried it north an' south,
- An' found the people short on heart but very long on mouth:
- I've wandered through the byways an' I've mingled with the crowds,
- An' felt a dam sight lonesomer than when above the clouds
- I stood alone 'mid ghostly isles that pierced a spectral sea
- An' cried in vain to far-off stars that couldn't answer me.

- I met a great philanthropist, whose wealth they say
 was ground
- From the labor of a thousand serfs,—whose fame's a-spreadin' round
- Because he built a edifice an' filled it full of books
- To learn the poor submission to incorporated crooks,
- An' seen him stop a barefoot kid with papers in the street
- An' hand to him a nickel for a flamin' one-cent sheet, Then sneak behind him for a block, a-keepin' him in range.
- To nab the limpin' little cuss if he tried to swipe the change.
- An' I rambled through the alleys of a big department store,
- Admirin' of the handsome gents which walk along the floor
- A-tellin' ladies where to go to get the cheapest things,—
- Where "Cash!" appears to be the song that everybody sings,
- An' somethin' like five hundred girls that ought to be at school
- Lean wearily against the shelves because there's nary a stool,—
- An' I'm told the chap who owns the claim has the immortal nerve
- To pay but half a case a day to them that stand an' serve.

- I'm also told that this here man exists in princely style
- In marble halls set on a hill that slopes away a mile,
- An' to stupefy his conscience he's donated from his wad
- Some money to the heathens an' has built a house for God;
- An' drowsin' in his temple on a recent Sabbath morn,
- I seen again the faces of them girls so pale an' lorn, An' wondered if the cuss was bankin' on the heathens he had saved
- For a discount up in heaven 'gainst the white folks he'd enslaved.
- Then I roused up from my dreamin' that the organ had produced
- An' thought about the Yukon boys I've so shamefully traduced,
- An' seen again quite clearly, in no music-painted dream,
- Two snow-blind men a-stumblin' 'hind a limpin'
 Siwash team.—
- Old Cooley an' his pardner Jo, who never go to church.
- A-strugglin' back to Circle from their long trip out on Birch

- To feed the starvin' Tananas,—a service so highpriced
- They'll not collect their wages till they hand their time to Christ.
- In trampin' through this high-toned land I'm painfully surprised
- To learn that butchers so refined an' highly civilized That they'd disdain to occupy a mansion built of logs
- Provide our soldiers beef an' things I wouldn't feed my dogs;
- Which makes me want to get back where the canned goods ain't so bad
- An' the girls you meet on every hand ain't palefaced, thin, an' sad,—
- Where the milk of human kindness ain't so rigidly congealed
- That we'd let 'em wander from the trail because they wasn't heeled.
- I want to hear the soothin' tones of Bates's old guitar
- As he sings about "The Fisher Maiden" at "The Polar Star."
- An' see Brick Wheaton rassle with his yaller mandolin
- As he chants the charms of Injun hooteh an' other kinds of sin;

- I want to hear them songs once more an' want to see my friends
- Where the swiftly-rushin' Klondike with the mighty Yukon blends.
- An' they size a feller-sinner by his heart an' what he knows
- An' never ask his Southern name or criticise his clo's.
- I want to see Aurora—not the one that greets the day,
- But her weak an' pallid namesake—try to drive the night away,
- An' watch her throw her shafts of silver far up in the sky,
- While her color-bearers tint 'em with an everchangin' dye,
- An' from the walls of heaven all their fragile banners swing
- Till the air's alive with whispers like the swishin' of a wing,
- An' from the zenith flash great lights across the interspace
- Till you feel you're in God's presence an' can almost see His face.
- So I'm goin' back to Dawson, an' I'll float along that way
- As the ice moves down the river, 'long about the last of May,

When birds an' flowers are flirtin' an' the white clouds sail the blue-

An' the energetic insecks get in their fine work too. I know now what I didn't when I went up there before.

That it is soshul suicide to linger round here poor, For though the Arctic winters there are long an' dark an' cold,

They're warmer than my welcome when they found I brought no gold.

WASHINGTON, D. C., Feb. 22, 1899.

TO JOAQUIN MILLER

Here at the Gate of the Arctic,
Facing the silent land,
Backward I reach through the distance
And grasp your heart-hot hand.
If our earthly trails ne'er cross again,
I'll meet you farther west,
On the sunset side of the Sundown Sea,
Where trail-worn poets rest.

CHILKOOT PASS, June 19, 1899.

ALASKA TO UNCLE SAM

Sitting on my greatest glacier,
With my feet in Bering Sea,
I am thinking, cold and lonely,
Of the way you've treated me.
Three-and-thirty years of silence!
Through ten thousand sleepless nights
I've been praying for your coming—
For the dawn of civil rights.

When you took me, young and trusting,
From the growling Russian bear,
Loud you swore before the nations
I should have the Eagle's care.

Never yet has wing of eagle
Cast a shadow on my peaks,
But I've watched the flight of buzzards
And I've felt their busy beaks.

Your imported cross-roads statesmen
(What a motley, sordid train!)
Come with laws conceived in closets,—
Made for loot and private gain!
These the best that you can furnish?
Then God help the heathen folk
You have rescued from the burden
Of the rotting Spanish yoke!

I'm a full-grown, proud-souled woman,
And I'm getting tired and sick—
Wearing all the cast-off garments
Of your body politic.

If you'll give me your permission,
I will make some wholesome laws
That will suit my hard conditions
And promote your country's cause.

By the latest mail you sent me
(Nearly all your mails are late!),
Comes the news that you've gone roving
In your proud old Ship of State,—
Dreaming with a sunburnt siren
By the sultry southern seas,
Where the songs of your enchantress
Swoon upon the scented breeze.

You are blind with lust of conquest
And desire for foreign trade,
Or you'd see the half-drawn dagger,
With its brightly-burnished blade,
Sticking in the loosened girdle
Of the black brute by your side—
If you treat her as I'm treated
She will stick it through your hide.

Curb your taste for sun-killed countries,
Where the natives loaf and shirk;
Come to richer northern regions,
Where the people think and work.
If you want a part of Asia
When the Chinamen are killed,
Run a railroad up to Bering—
I will show you where to build.

Come next spring and count my treasures,
And don't stop at Glacier Bay,
Like the many high commissions
You have started up this way.
You will see my wooded mountains,
With their citadels of snow
Gleaming in the purple distance
Through the pearl-hued alpen-glow.

Standing on my flower-strewn hillsides,
Where my mighty rivers meet,
Gazing o'er my verdant valleys,
Spreading seaward from your feet,
You will see the sunlit splendors
Of my moonless midnight skies,
Gilded with the light supernal
Shining straight from Paradise.

If you stay till Hoary Winter
Has entombed the silent land,
You will read celestial sermons,
Written by the Master's hand
On the azure walls of heaven,
Where Aurora's tinted light
Weirdly flits like summer lightning
All the ghostly Arctic night.

When you come I'll show you wonders
That will cause you great surprise,
And if gold is what you're seeking
You will open wide your eyes.
Drive away your Wall street schemers,
With their coupons and their nerve,—
Then while you extend your commerce
I'll expand your gold reserve.

You will find a magic city
On the shore of Bering Strait
Which shall be for you a station
To unload your Arctic freight,
Where the gold of Humboldt's vision
Has for countless ages lain,
Waiting for the hand of labor
And the Saxon's tireless brain.

You shall have a cool vacation,

Hunting for the great white bear,
And you'll soon forget Manila

And the trouble you've had there;
For as in the morn of nations

Every highway led to Rome,
You and all your restless rivals

Will be sailing straight to Nome.

You will wake a sleeping empire,
Stretching southward from the Pole
To the headlands where the waters
Of your western ocean roll.
Then will rise a mighty people
From the travail of the years,
Whom with pride you'll call your children,—
Offspring of my pioneers.

FORT YUKON, Sept. 6, 1899.

THOUGHTS SUGGESTED BY MY FORTY-FIFTH BIRTHDAY

When a man gets along to about forty-two, He's apt to sit down and let pass in review The scenes of his past, and he's likely to make An effort to spot the fatal mistake Which changed the whole course of human events With regard to his hopes and honest intents.

One makes his mistake in the morning of life, In failing to choose or in choosing a wife; Another takes a drink and the evil is done, And Dishonor completes what the Devil begun, While many evade Life's pitfalls and snares Till Old Time has garnered or silvered their hairs.

But mine was the earliest failure on earth,
For I made my mistake at the hour of birth
By making my debut, an undressed kid,
The same day of the month that Washington did,
And I look back now and see quite plain
Why all of my efforts have been in vain.

You've heard about George and his cute little ax And his weakness for sticking too close to the facts. My very first effort to emulate him Gave a shock to my system that made my head swim, For when I confessed to my volatile dad I got the worst licking I ever have had.

In spite of that set-back I've kept up the fight 'Gainst Error and Falsehood, for Truth and the Right;

But always through life I've felt the restraint Of the gift handed down by my Natal-day Saint, And I'm forced to admit that Virtue's reward Is the only return I can thus far record.

No matter what pathway I've chosen in life, In city or country or political strife, On the crest of a mountain or the marge of a lake, There stood close beside me my fatal mistake, And wherever my lofty ambition has led I've seen my hopes wither, my projects drop dead.

But here in the Arctic, where Falsehood is tough, The pathway of Truth is peculiarly rough, And as I gaze out o'er the white frozen sea I feel all too keenly it's no place for me, For no one who sticks to George W.'s creed Can ever expect in this land to succeed.

ST. MICHAEL, Feb. 22, 1900.

THE LAMENT OF THE OLD SOUR DOUGH

I've trudged and I've starved and I've frozen
All over this white barren land,—
Where the sea stretches straight, white and silent,
Where the timberless white mountains stand,—
From the white peaks that gleam in the moonlight,
Like a garment that graces a soul,
To the last white sweep of the prairies,
Where the black shadows brood round the Pole.

(Now, pray don't presume from this prelude
That a flame of poetical fire
Is to burst from my brain like a beacon,
For I've only been tuning my lyre
To the low, sad voice of a singer
Who's inspired to sing you some facts
About the improvements in staking
And the men who mine with an ax.)

I've panned from Peru to Point Barrow,
But I never located a claim
Till I'd fully persuaded my conscience
That pay dirt pervaded the same;
And this is the source of my sorrow,
As you will be forced to agree
When you learn how relentless Misfortune
Has dumped all her tailings on me,

I worked with my pardner all summer,
Cross-cutting a cussed cold creek,
Which we never once thought of locating
Unless we located the streak;
And when at the close of the season
We discovered the creek was a fake
We also discovered the region
Had nothing left in it to stake.

We traversed the toe-twisting tundra,

Where reindeer root round for their feed,

And the hungry Laplanders who herd them

Devour them before they can breed.

Here it seemed that good claims might be plenty,

And we thought we would stake one—perhaps;

But we found to our grief that the gulches

Were staked in the name of the Lapps.

A hundred long leagues to the northward,
O'er the untrodden, sun-burnished snow,
We struggled, half blind and half famished,
To the sea where the staunch whalers go.
We found there broad beaches of ruby
And mountains with placers and leads,
But all save the sky was pre-empted
By salt-water sailors and Swedes.

Then we climbed the cold creeks near a mission
That is run by the agents of God,
Who trade Bibles and prayer-books to heathen
For ivory, sealskins and cod.
At last we were sure we had struck it,
But alas! for our hope of reward,—
The landscape from sea-beach to sky-line
Was staked in the name of the Lord!

We're too slow for the new breed of miners,
Embracing all classes of men,
Who locate by power of attorney
And prospect their claims with a pen,—
Who do all of their fine work through agents
And loaf around town with the sports,
On intimate terms with the lawyers,
On similar terms with the courts.

We're scared to submission and silence
By the men the Government sends
To force us to keep law and order,
While they keep claims for their friends,
And collect in an indirect manner
An exceedingly burdensome tax,
Assumed for a time by the traders
And then transferred to our backs.

We had some hard knocks on the Klondike
From the Cub-lion's unpadded paws,
And suffered some shocks from high license
And other immutable laws;
But they robbed us by regular schedule,
So we knew just what to expect,
While at Nome we're scheduled to struggle
Until we're financially wrecked.

I'm sick of the scream of the Eagle
And laws of dishonest design,
And I'm going in quest of a country
Where a miner can locate a mine;
So when I have rustled an outfit
These places will know me no more,
For I'll try my luck with the Russians
On the bleak Siberian shore.

Nome, April 15, 1900.

THE GOLDSMITH OF NOME

1

I am resting by my anvil,
And my forge is growing cold;
I have ceased my age-long labors,
I have beaten out my gold;
I have scattered wide my treasures
On the superficial sands,
Where they lie unlocked and waiting
For the work of human hands.

Where my far-spread barren beaches
Lay untrod through countless years,
I can see the meager camp-fires
Of the hardy pioneers
Who have learned anew my secret
From the unsecretive sands,
And have sent my golden message
To the workers in all lands.

Gazing southward through the valleys
Where the ice-chained rivers sleep
'Neath their wide-flung ghostly mantles
And the Arctic nightwinds sweep,
I see men of dauntless spirit,—
Men whose brave hearts never quail,—
Struggling northward o'er wild barrens,
Breaking for the world a trail.

Looking out across the waters
Stretching sunward to the Sound,
I can see the sons of labor
Boarding vessels hitherbound;
I can hear the great crowds cheering
On the fast-receding piers,
Where sad mothers clasp their children
And gaze seaward through their tears.

I can see my people coming,
Sailing over many seas;
I can see the white sails swelling
As they catch the southern breeze;
I can see the black smoke trailing
From the sloping steamer-stacks,
Throwing swiftly-circling shadows
Over foamy, swirling tracks.

From the swarming, stifling cities,
Where wan children gasp for breath;
From the shadeless, unploughed prairies,
Where grim cyclones scatter death;
From the old world's worked-out placer
And the rock-choked mountain gorge,
They are coming by the thousands
For the product of my forge.

Ħ

Here I wrought throughout the ages,
By the silent, tideless sea,
Beating out my golden ingots
For the empire yet to be,—
Watched the mighty strife of Nature,
Heard the glacial millstones grind,
Marked the rise and fall of nations,
Timed the progress of mankind.

While the seven-hued Arctic lightning
Faintly flashes through the night,
Tinting all the ghostly landscape
With its soft, elusive light,
I am dreaming of the glory
Of the prehistoric race
Which inhabited these valleys
When the first stampede took place.

When I entered on my labors
Stately palmtrees weirdly threw
Slender shadows in the moonlight,
Where the sea slept warm and blue;
In the dark primeval forest,
Dank beneath a tropic sun,
Roamed wild beasts of form colossal,
Greater than the mastodon.

Birds of brilliant sun-lit plumage
Caroled in the fronded trees,
And their songs were wafted seaward
On the balmy summer breeze;
Fragrant flowers exhaled their odors,
And the distant hazy hills
Lulled the fruitful vales and uplands
With the music of their rills.

From the plain swept wooded mountains
So immeasurably high
That their gleaming, snowy summits
Pierced the opalescent sky,
While the sun sent shafts of amber
To adorn their clinging clouds,
And the moon as came the night-tide
Veiled their forms in silver shrouds.

Women framed in perfect beauty,
Greatest gift that God had given,
Reared to manhood happy children,
Taught them truth derived from heaven;
Men of elemental wisdom,
Giants of that elder time,
Made the land an earthly Eden,
Free from poverty and crime.

III

From beyond the distant mountains,
Where the day pursues the dawn,
Came strange men of pallid visage,
Active brain and feeble brawn,
Who brought all their wiles and vices,
Leaving truth and virtue home,
And at once took up the burden
Of good government for Nome.

They brought all the arts and customs
Of the countries whence they came,
All their culture and refinement,
All their wickedness and shame,
And they taught my simple people
All their subtlety of mind
And the luxury of living
On the labor of their kind.

They unearthed my hidden treasures,
Filled their coffers full of gold,
Trafficked in the market places
Where their fellowmen were sold,
Made of woman's soul and virtue
The cheap plaything of an hour,
Gave the rights of man to Mammon,
Bought their way to place and power.

When God saw the selfish uses

To which men had put His gold,
Black His brow became with anger

And His heart grew stern and cold,
And He hurled His bolts of thunder

From the battlements of heaven
Till the sun went out in darkness

And remotest space was riven.

Then came on that awful travail
Which made Mother Nature groan,
Shook the stars from out the heavens,
Threw the Devil from his throne,
Swung the planets from their orbits
Till they aimless swept and whirled,
Turned the Tropics to the Arctics,
And repolarized the world.

Through the frigid, age-long winter

Here in loneliness I dwelt

In my breezy glacial cavern,

Waiting for the ice to melt,

Till at last I caught a vision,

Through the sun-transfigured rime,

Of my vales once more aslumber

'Neath the haze of summertime.

TV

Then I watched that wondrous waking,
Nineteen hundred years ago,
When the great searchlights of Heaven
Set the universe aglow,
Throwing rays of hope and comfort
Through the darkness of despair
Hanging o'er the heavy laden
And the weary everywhere.

All night long the earth lay sleeping
'Neath a pale, mysterious light
Beaming from the throne of Heaven,
Where God's lamps were burning bright;
Choirs scraphic made sweet music,
Faintly heard through gates ajar;—
In the East above the morning
Shone a new irradiant Star.

Jesus came and taught His lessons,
Walked the earth a little space,
Lighted all the ways of sorrow
With the glory of His face,
Planted hope in hopeless bosoms
As he went from door to door,
Wept and fainted by the wayside
'Neath the burdens of the poor.

He rebuked the righteous rascals
Who stood in the street to pray,
Scourged the brokers from God's temple,
Drove the hypocrites away,
Lifted up forsaken women,
Cheered the lonely and distressed,
Folded hungry little children
Gently to His loving breast.

Then the money-changers dragged Him
Like a drunkard through the street,
Thrust sharp thorns in His pale forehead,
Pierced with nails His bleeding feet,
Stretched Him on the tree of torture,
And His quivering muscles tore,
As upon the cross of labor
They now crucify the poor.

As His Spirit sped to Heaven,
Clothed in raiment white as snow,
From afar I heard His promise
To all workers here below:
"Watch and labor in my vineyard,
Bear the burden and the pain;
I am going to my Father,
But I'll come to you again."

V

Then a great awaking pity
Seized upon my swelling breast,
And my heart was filled with yearning
For the wretched and oppressed;
As a father loves to labor
For the children of his bone,
I have wrought here for my people,
In the silence and alone.

I have watched them sadly toiling
Through the centuries as slaves,
Never laying down their burdens
Till they dropped them at their graves,
And while watching I've been working
For the workers in all lands,
For the millions born to labor,
Their sole heritage their hands.

Not as wrought the other Goldsmiths,
Jealous of their hoarded wealth,
Who in darkness through the ages
Wrought in secret, and by stealth
Hid it in the heart of mountains
From the primal stratum hurled,
Or beneath the slag and cinders
In the basement of the world.

They wrought for the thrifty masters,
For the men of fertile brain,
Who grow rich through toil of others,
Thriving on their brothers' pain,—
Who by traffic with earth's rulers
Gain control of Nature's sod,
Arrogating as their birthright
A co-partnership with God.

Come and take my golden treasures
From the shining, yielding sands;
They shall be the untithed wages
Of your free, unfettered hands.
If the men who prey on labor
Try to grasp the gold you glean,
I will call the guardian nation,
And she'll scourge them from the scene.

For the self-selected savior
Of the islands of the sea
Will not idly stand and witness
Such a blow to liberty;
She that 'round the lazy heathen
Her protecting arms has thrown
Will not let her working children
Be defrauded of their own.

Nome, April 1, 1900.

SINCE THE JUDGE LEFT HERE FOR NOME

- Like one just waking from a dream, I walked abroad to-day
- And rambled to the green-roofed town that sleeps across the bay;
- I wandered to the empty house, where I was wont to go
- And always found a welcome and a solace for my woe,—
- Where erstwhile on cold winter nights (so long and yet so short!)
- We boys from all the island round did frequently resort
- To celebrate the passing hours by playing cards and pool,
- While our kind host walked back and forth and with his famous tool
- Extracted corks and filled us up on beer and wine and stuff
- Till each had sworn repeatedly that he was full enough.

- I stood despondent at the door and faced the frozen foam
- That from my frail and faltering feet reached westward to Cape Nome,
- And as I gazed with brimming eyes across the shining sea,
- Some sober thoughts and sentiments were blown ashore to me.
- I pictured in my burning brain the Judge upon the trail.
- Entombed within a native shack or struck by Arctic gale.
- And then that old, old question came and bothered me again:
- "Are those who go or those who stay the sport of greatest pain?"
- And as I rubbed my throbbing brow, my aching heart repined:
- "The ones who suffer most of all are those who stay behind!"
- I'm sure as westward speeds the Judge he little apprehends
- The frightful havoc he has wrought among his former friends:
- If he could hear them sigh and groan and see them try to walk,

- I'm sure he never would again produce his private stock
- Of Runnymede and Pommery's and Mumm's seductive secs
- And pour the same persistently down their receptive necks.
- (The thing that seems most strange to me and fills me with surprise
- Is how the Judge's private stock affects a fellow's eyes.—
- Last night before he went away the town was painted red,
- But now it wears a ghastly green like grave-grass o'er the dead.)

.

- I wandered through the hatless hall and passed from room to room.
- Last night alive with mirth and light, to-day adead with gloom.
- I went into the parlor, where we used to sit around And suffer till the Judge his punch did perfectly compound.
- The bookcase stood with vacant shelves and doors extended wide,
- As if it yearned for vanished friends that once reposed inside;

- Some flowering plants, left there abloom with blossoms chaste and rare,
- Already drooped their slender stems for want of woman's care,—
- The sight of these familiar things intensified my grief
 - So that I sadly turned away and sought outside relief.
 - I blundered with uncertain steps into a closet dark, Where stood the shapes of spirits flown, all glassyeyed and stark,—
 - A hundred bottles; all uncorked (last night with fullness rife),
 - Proclaiming by their emptiness the emptiness of life. What happened then? Was it a dream? What was 1 looking at?
 - What was it that on yonder shelf so calm and proudly sat?
 - (It was a large cold cruse of Mumm the Judge forgot to crack,—
 - I cracked it with celerity, my lips began to smack,
 - And to my careless absent friend I drank this truthful toast:
 - "Of all the drinks I've drunk with you I needed this one most!")

* * * * * * * *

- The room that had appeared so dark was brilliantly ablaze.—
- The scene now shone transplendent with the light of other days:
- The place was full of brawny men and charming women too .-
- The former rather numerous, the latter somewhat few:
- I heard again the happy jest, the reading of old rhymes.
- The tales of hardships long endured, the stories of old times:
- I heard once more the sweet old songs, sung with a graceful art
- That made us think of childhood's days and softened every heart:
- And then I sank into a chair and wished I was in Nome.
- And while I wished I fell asleep and dreamed a dream of home.

ST. MICHAEL, April 25, 1900.

TO THE YUKON ORDER OF PIONEERS

In Memory of Charles S. Lavante. Died at Nome, Sept. 8, 1900

- Will you let an Arctic Brother lay a garland on the bier
- Where sleeps the stark and pallid form of a Yukon Pioneer?
- Will you let me pay a tribute to the one you mourn to-day.
- Whose soul is speeding homeward from its workedout dump of clay?
- I spent a winter with your friend among the Yukon hills,
- And shared with him his simple joys and complicated ills:
- I saw him tested by the rule which few at Nome observe,
- That we should do to other men what we ourselves deserve.

- He broke the rules of order and the excise ordinance
- By selling untaxed liquor at the old-time Siwash dance;
- But he never broke the maxim of the mushers on the trail,
- That it's wrong to pass a comrade when you see he's apt to fail.
- I see his face a-beaming as he stood behind the bar and listened to the soothing tones of Bates's old guitar,
- In the good old days at Circle, ere the courts and lawyers came
- To rob our richest sluices in a way that is a shame.
- I hear again his gentle voice and see his sad, sweet smile,
- As he told the tales of hardship on the creeks at Forty Mile,—
- How you wintered on bad bacon and on prehistoric beans,
- And when you had the scurvy steeped the spruce boughs for your greens.

- He told me all about the trails that climbed up in the air,
- Meandered o'er the mountain peaks, and ended—God knows where;
- He told me of the hopeful times you spent at Cassiar,
- And how you used to rock out gold on old Bonanza Bar.
- He told me how the traders used to do you boys up brown
- By putting up the prices when they said they'd put them down,
- And all about that awful year you fellows almost died
- Because you missed "The Racket" and were forced to stay inside.
- His latchstring always hung outside, and you never had to knock,
- For he had no knocker at his door, and he hadn't any lock;
- When you asked him for a porterhouse he dished up caribou,
- And when you craved a whisky straight he set up "hootchinoo."

- He never liked the Klondike, and he had no faith in Nome,
- And since he came, in '86, he got no news from home;
- But he never lost his courage, and he always used to say
- That the good old times at Forty Mile would come again to stay.
- The good old times have come to him, but not at Forty Mile,
- And ne'er again at Circle will you see his happy smile;
- For he's gone to take his well-earned rest in the universal way.
- And I know he'll find God's latchstring a-hanging out to-day.

Nome, Sept. 9, 1900.

A GREETING TO THE SWEDES

From their Fellow-sufferers at Topkuk

- We learn to-day that you've received a meesage from the Sound
- Which loosed the legal ligatures with which your claims were bound.
- We send our warmest greetings, and hope that you will get
- The dust the Boss Receiver is a-hanging onto yet.
- We had our little laughs last year, and chuckled at your woes
- Caused by the festive jumpers and the mournful old Sour Doughs;
- But we've ceased to smile and laid our laughs upon the upper shelves,
- For we have learned to our regret just how it is ourselves.

- We have a sub-receiver here, who's working out our mine
- In a systematic manner which makes our hearts repine.
- He brought a damned expensive plant, shipped in his boss's name.
- And planted it against our "kick" upon our richest claim.
- He brought a gang of bosom friends, helped up here from below,
- And wouldn't give a single job to any one we know, And when he took the rifles out and weighed his shining swag.
- He wouldn't let us see the scales or even heft the bag.
- We called upon the lowest court and all the powers that be,—
- We raised our mournful cries to heaven and sent them out to sea;
- We cried in vain for earthly help and almost ceased to fight,
- When Nature took a hand and gave a knock-out blow for right.

- Last week the foam-crowned Sea King came and served his unbought writ.
- And Aleck's high-priced plant now lies deep down beneath the spit.
- God jumped our claim and drove away the horde of unpaid hands,
- Who wander up and down and weep along our worked-out sands.
- We join with you in praise to-day and raise a joyful shout
- In honor of the righteous laws that knocked the jumpers out.
- Let's celebrate in dry champagne the powers that. wield the rod .--
- You thank the U. S. Circuit Court while we give thanks to God!

TOPKUK, Sept. 16, 1900.

THE POOR SWEDE

A square-headed, hard-working Swede,
Propelled by inordinate greed,
Mushed around in the cold
Till he found some coarse gold,
And then came to town at full speed.

A lawyer with galvanized jaw,
Whose mode of procedure was raw,
Sent a thief out to jump
The rich claim of the chump
And stake it "according to law."

The Swede is now stretched on the rack
And trying to get his claim back,
While the Court takes its time
To consider the crime
Till the receiver fills up his long sack.

Nome, Sept. 17, 1900.

STARVING ONCE, RECEIVING NOW

I

A lawyer was disbarred back home
And found it convenient to roam;
He floated this way
In a cargo of hay
And inflicted his presence on Nome.

He waited for clients to rob

Till his stomach demanded a job;

Then he haunted the street

For something to eat

Till he looked like a Klondike slob.

П

A miner climbed over the hills

And prospected the gulches and rills

Till he discovered enough

Of the right kind of stuff

To drive away poverty's ills.

He staked a rich claim in his name

And proceeded to ground-sluice the same;

Then he came in and bragged

Of the gold he had bagged,—

That's why he's not working his claim.

III

The case was decided next day
In the usual ex parte way,
And the miner then found
He was robbed of his ground
And couldn't get even a lay.

The lawyer now has ample means
And frequents the most brilliant scenes;
He eats three times a day
At the Paree Caffay,
While the miner eats bacon and beans.

Nome, Sept. 18, 1900.

HOMEWARD BOUND

I am out upon the ocean,
Sailing southward to the Sound
With six hundred busted brothers,
Kicking hard, but homeward bound.
There are sixty in the staterooms
And some eighty souls or so
Sleeping on the floors and tables,
While the rest seek sleep below.

Of the sixty in the cabin
Only thirty had the stuff,
While the others came on passes
Or some other sort of bluff.
How the hundreds in the steerage
Got the gold to get them home
Always will remain the greatest
Of the mysteries of Nome.

There's a siren from Seattle

Who is traveling in style,

Basking in the brilliant sunshine

Of the purser's dazzling smile.

She has jumped a first-class stateroom

That is simply out of sight,

And has oranges and apples

With her champagne every night.

There's a widow with two children
Who is trying to get home,
Having given up the struggle
When her husband died at Nome.
Both her kids exhibit cravings
For all kinds of fruits and nuts,
But they can't get 'nough of either
To distend their little guts.

There's a smooth absconding lawyer,
Wearing diamonds like a sport,
Who spends all his lucid moments
Praising Nome's imported Court.
He has beefsteaks in his stateroom,
Purloined by the pantryman,
While his clients in the steerage
Eat cold corn-beef from a can.

There's a Topkuk sub-receiver

Who is smuggling like a thief
All the gold the gang could gobble

For their late-transported Chief.

He indulges in fresh oysters,

Fine cigars and foreign wines,

While the man who first staked Topkuk

Tells us how they robbed his mines.

There are counts galore from Paris
And a few of them from Spain,
Who invaded Nome to traffic;
But they'll not do so again,
For they found their debts so heavy
That they had to leave them there,
While their unpaid Dago valets
Had to come out on the Bear.

Late last night they gave a banquet,
And imposed some heavy fines
To defray the steward's charges
For his bummest brands of wines.
All the guests stood the assessment
Without making any kick,
But as soon as they get sober
They'll appreciate the trick.

I shall not recount the horrors
And the terrors of the trip,
For the same may be imagined
By all those who know the ship;
But I'll simply say in closing
That the most distressing fact
That has come to my attention
Is the way the ladies act.

LAT. 55, 54 N., LONG. 139, 18 W., Nov. 1, 1900.

TO THE YUKON SOUR DOUGHS

I've done just as you told me that night I read to you

My simple Yukon verses and you said, "By God! they're true!"

But I can't report much progress in a literary way, For the folks down here don't hanker for the things I have to say.

I read my verses to some men officially quite high,
Who could give you boys up there relief if they
would only try;

But I couldn't make them smile or weep or even once relax.—

Perhaps they don't like poetry that's based on solid facts.

- I read them to the statesmen who combined and formed a trust
- To monopolize sluice-robbing and to confiscate your dust.
- And shipped to Nome last summer a gang of hired hands
- To drive you from your placers and to gut your golden sands.
- I held them with my glittering eye and read my very best.
- Just as the Ancient Mariner held up the wedding guest:
- But just before I made my point they vanished with the "whips"
- To reorganize the army and to subsidize some ships.
- I tried to get my verses in the daily picture-press,
- But the men who guard its columns sent them back to my address,
- With the gentle intimation, "We've no room for news from Nome:
- We're too busy with our neighbors to consider crimes at home."

- Then I sent them to the censors of the 10-cent magazines;
- But they wanted stuff from China or the unwhipped Philippines.
- Or a lot of pictures showing how the British butcher
 Boers.—
- Not a word about the pirates who infest your barren shores
- So I've had my verses printed, and I send them up to you.
- Who for years have borne the burden, but are yet as staunch and true
- As when first you blazed the pathway to the white and silent land;
- And I know that when you read them you will feel and understand.

WASHINGTON, D. C., Feb. 1, 1901.







